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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

August 20, 1980

Mr. Boyd Evison
Superintendent
Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park
Three Rivers, California 93271

Dear Boyd:

I recognize only too well that you are new to the job, but I do want to share with you my views on the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) proposal for the Mineral King area, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park.

In light of the Park Service's opportunity to be innovative in carrying out a Congressional mandate of "ensuring the preservation of the outstanding natural and scenic features of Mineral King for present and future generations and to enhance public enjoyment of the area," I feel that the Preferred Alternative to be totally void of an imaginative management concept.

Public Law 95-625, which transferred Mineral King from the Forest Service to National Park Service jurisdiction, states that in the development of a comprehensive management plan for the 16,200 acres "the Secretary shall give appropriate consideration to the need for the development of additional recreational opportunities and other public uses which are consistent with sound environmental management of the area and the policies of the National Park Service."

Only in Alternative D is this addressed, and that alternative contemplates many other major actions which would have little support and questionable returns on a Federal investment. This is contrary to House Report 95-1165 which directed "the Secretary to at least consider as alternatives one or more types of skiing facility development in the discussion of recreational opportunities during preparations on the comprehensive management plan..."

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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2023.009.0320 a

During the development of P.L. 95-625 a letter from Assistant Secretary of the Interior Robert Herbst was made a part of the record by the senior Senator from California, the Honorable Alan Cranston, in which he outlines four alternatives for development. In my view the alternatives contained in the draft Comprehensive Management Plan do not reflect Assistant Secretary Herbst's commitment, let alone the letter of the law.

Mr. Herbst offered a (1) present use and development level plan in which "such a possible additional uses include increase in winter primitive snow touring and guided interpretive tours"; (2) development to enable year-round use -- moderate in which "winter use would be accommodated and would include cross-country skiing, snow touring and snow play"' (3) development to enable year-round use -- downhill skiing, an option that was later denied by Senate action prohibiting the development of permanent facilities for downhill skiing; and finally (4) Forest Service Plan B which would increase summer use only.

In that the CMP now under consideration only addresses current minimal winter use, I should like to call to your attention the opportunity to introduce Nordique or developed track cross-country skiing which is one of the fastest growing ski sports. This kind of skiing needs no permanent facility other than a snow cat to lay a precise trail for the adventuresome skiier. Surely an agency that can endorse and regulate hanggliding and parachuting has the capability of regulating Nordique-type skiing. I should urge you to look into this specifically, but do so without burdening the alternative with major road realignment. In my view this can be done by simply adding it to the preferred Alternative A, and I shall certainly do all I can to assist in evaluating this overlooked option.

I am told that in addition to the track itself, the ancilary needs include ample parking space, restroom facilities, a care-shop to accommodate the needs of the skiiers, and, perhaps, rest areas along the trails themselves. This appears to be contemplated in some of the future action plans of Alternative A for Silver City, and in the immediate action plan for Silver City in Alternatives C and D.

Should the final CMP include this option, I should anticipate that snowmobiling also would be permitted and encouraged as trail location for this activity could parallel the cross-country ski trail and use would be compatible.

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I also am disturbed by the CMP description of methods by which the Mineral King deer herd will be managed. On one hand you propose the possibility of utilizing National Park Service personnel to "thin the herd and alleviate the strain on the range", yet the plan does not address the issue of adequately protecting key deer fawning areas from human disturbance in July and August, an issue first raised in 1975 by the State of California's Secretary for Resources Clair Dedrick.

The CMP must address in more detail enhancement of the winter range for the herd as well as other alternatives to actual harvesting to reduce herd size. I should be much more comfortable once this issue has been fully addressed. The State of California should be consulted in every detail. This is as stated in Sec. 3 of P.L. 95-625.

Further, House Report 95-1165 declared that "without proper management, the wildlife resources could be adversely impacted by inadequate control of visitor use." I also note that the House Report provides guidelines for reduction of the deer population "when and if necessary. The Secretary, in development of the plan, should cooperate with the California Department of Fish and Game,"

By proposing careful control over human disturbance of the deer fawning areas, as proposed by the State of California, the CMP would address two issues simultaneously. One, the human encroachment into the Valley would be reduced during the period of time when the area receives its highest and probably most environmentally damaging human impact.

Also, in my view, by slightly restricting some summer use and adding the opportunity for Nordique-type skiing, the NPS would be spreading the human factor over a long period of time, diminishing the total impact in the process.

By utilizing figures from Appendix C of the CMP, we can easily determine that current six month winter use from December to May has seldom, if ever, exceeded the single month use of either June, July, August or September. Further, under no existing measured visitation period has the carbon monoxide concentration come close to the state and Federal standards of 35 parts per million in a one hour period. By the Park Service's own estimate it would require nearly 20,000 cars per hour to reach the maximum.

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Also of concern to me is the National Park Service's policy of eliminating the stocking of trout in lakes and streams in wilderness or wilderness-designated areas, as well as lands not designated. As the CMP contemplates 14,078 acres of wilderness addition encompassing the majority of the fishing areas of Mineral King, I should think it pure folly to consider an absolute halting of the practice in any of the streams or lakes. It is my feeling that if some degree of artificial stocking does not continue, the National Park Service will be embracing a misguided policy of concentrating more and more people, in this case anglers, in fewer and fewer areas and causing a severe impact on those remaining self-sustaining fisheries. In time, under a rigidly enforced policy of no artificial planting, no fishery would remain. This would be totally inconsistent with P.L. 95-625, which directs the NPS "to insure the permanent conservation of wildlife within the area added to the park by this section,"

I am further disappointed that the CMP does not address two concerns raised by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. One of these is the access road to Mineral King which is currently maintained by Tulare County. Sec. 314(c)(6) of P.L. 95-625 requires the National Park Service to address possible acquisition by donation, and the Western Regional Director, National Park Service, on June 5, 1980, advised that should the county elect to transfer the road to NPS jurisdiction, a two-year advance notice would be advisable so that sufficient funds can be programmed into the budget. I can find no reference to the potential addition of the existing road in the CMP and trust this can be corrected after careful negotiations with Tulare County.

The second deals with solid waste disposal, an issue raised by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors, The CMP itself does not address this in any manner, and I should trust that initial discussions regarding this will not only spell out alternatives for Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, but the Mineral King addition as well.

These suggestions are offered in the spirit of cooperation and are within the framework of existing law. I trust they will be given careful consideration and that you will not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Member of Congress

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